

# Kansas Memory



## E.B. Whitman to George L. Stearns

Letter from Edmund Burke Whitman to George Stearns that details the activities of the last six months and Whitman's take on the inhabitants of the state of Kansas. In his opinion, Kansas has some of the best residents and some of the worst. Whitman mentioned the suspicion that accompanied the exchanges between the two parties in the territory and the fact that if the Lecompton Constitution was adopted by Congress, the Free State men must rally under the Topeka government and resist. A searchable transcription is available by clicking "Text Version" below.

Creator: Whitman, E. B. (Edmund Burke), 1812-1883

Date: April 13, 1858

Callnumber: George L. & Mary E. Stearns Papers Coll. #507, Box 1 Folder 1

KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 224687

Item Identifier: 224687

[www.kansasmemory.org/item/224687](http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/224687)

# Kansas Memory



KANSAS  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

E.B. Whitman to George L. Stearns

Whitman, E.B.

35587

Lawrence April 13, 1858

Geo. L Stearns Esq

My dear Sir

Yours of March 18<sup>th</sup> 30  
are both before me. Politically I can answer  
both in the same terms. A brief review of the  
course which events have taken here for the last  
six months will enable you to understand  
our position and appreciate our necessities.  
While Kansas is blessed with many of the  
truest - men of the age, men who are fully up  
to the emergency, she is also cursed with some  
of the most unprincipled demagogues that  
ever afflicted any country. Principles are of  
use to them only to subserve personal or party ends,  
and what makes the matter worse is that ~~some~~  
of them are among those who have heretofore been  
looked up to as leaders.

In January last a large number of the  
people were induced by the grossest deception  
to go into an election for State Officers under  
the Leavenworth Constitution. The distinct declaration

# Kansas Memory



KANSAS  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

E.B. Whitman to George L. Stearns

was made that the aim in this move was to fill  
the offices to the exclusion of others, Slavery men, and  
then to refrain from touching the unclean thing,  
and allow the people to set up their own Government,  
either the Topeka, or some other to be inaugurated  
by the Legislature about to assemble. No sooner  
were they elected, than some of the more bold and  
incautious began to avow their intention to  
put the Government in operation and make  
it the parent of the future Government.

In Jan'y, the two legislatures met, the Territorial  
Legislature of Free State men and the Topeka State ~~Gov~~  
Legislature. It very soon became evident to the most  
casual observer that there was very little unity  
of purpose, and in fact a real antagonism of  
principle. Long before the territorial Legislature  
adjourned it was pretty well understood that  
designing men were making tools and fools of the  
Topeka Legislature to subserve unworthy ends; to  
keep the people quiet while they matened their  
plans for its overthrow. Nothing however was  
said openly, but every body was suspicious of  
his neighbour. The bill for a new Constitutional  
Convention was evidently postponed with a  
design to defeat it and yet it was held

# Kansas Memory



KANSAS  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

E.B. Whitman to George L. Stearns

up as the compromise ground on which both extremes were to meet. On Sat., the Topeka Legislature adjourned and in the afternoon a mass meeting was held to consider of the public welfare. The Topeka Legislature had not adjourned ~~and~~ but were anxiously enquiring what to do. In order if possible to draw out an open declaration of secretly cherished purposes and to compel men to show their real colors, I introduced a resolution to the effect "That in case the Lecompton Constitution should be adopted by Congress and a Government inaugurated under it before the Constitutional Convention just created should have time to complete its work, then it would be the duty of every true free state man to fall back upon the so called Topeka Govt. and rally under it to the last." This called forth one of the warmest and the ablest debates that had ever taken place in Kansas, which was continued until one o'clock Sunday morning. It compelled a full declaration of opinion and of purpose. Gov. Robinson declared "that the Topeka Govt. was dead and had been since the last June," other prominent men declared, done that the free state officers & Legislature under the Lecompton Constitution, if recognized, would

# Kansas Memory



KANSAS  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

E.B. Whitman to George L. Stearns

assemble, organize and take the oath of allegiance ~~choose two United States Senators,~~ provide for a new Constitutional Convention and then adjourn, ~~thus that~~ "they would organize and call the convention, but ~~not~~ choose Senators, and still ~~others~~, that they should hold together and pass such laws as the occasion required, be they more or less." Now the vote upon the resolution would have stood I know not, but having accomplished my purpose of drawing out an open declaration of purpose I withdrew the resolution and the meeting adjourned.

On Monday the Topeka government formally broke up, killed by its professed friends, deserted by them who had created it, &c. But the members went home, and the people went to work in their own way and with a full knowledge of the issue, as made up, to choose delegates to the Constitutional convention. This convention met and when I say that they elected M. J. Conway Pres. it indicates their complexion. The instrument you have in this seen and it will speak for itself. In the test vote on Citizenship &c the Leavenworth faction showed steadily 19 votes only out of a convention of 80 - and many of

# Kansas Memory



KANSAS  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

E.B. Whitman to George L. Stearns

thou had succeeded by political manouvering  
in obtaining seats. In the course of the debates  
which took somewhat of a wide range, a  
severe blow was given to the purpose of those  
who had proposed to make any amendment  
of the Leavenworth, if accepted. The Leavenworth  
Free State men mystified and discomfited have  
returned home determined of possible to secure  
the officers also under this Constitution and then  
let this one die, & give the doctrine of the  
~~people~~ people's for the Free State Officers under the  
L. Constitution to take no oath, to refrain from  
all action under it but, letting it quietly fall  
and die, to give place to the ~~people's~~ government  
just now formed. It is held that under such  
circumstances the Federal Govt. could have  
no show of right to interfere and all would  
end well. If the Leavenworth Constitution is adopted  
and pro Slavey men receive their certificates, or  
enough of them to secure their ends, - the boys  
\_\_\_\_\_. If the Free State men get their  
certificates a of the Constitution is expected then  
every thing will depend upon the character of

# Kansas Memory



KANSAS  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

E.B. Whitman to George L. Stearns

the men elected under the new Constitution,  
If the eight men are put in power under it. Then  
they will make of the living government of the  
State and no power on Earth can withstand  
it. They made it, to stand by it, and for no  
bogus game. But the LeComptons - or in  
other words the Plummer, Conservative Democratic  
free state men; if they can possess its offices,  
will guilty, let it die. They are strict legitimists  
and have all at once a holy horror of any  
thing not having the forms of law, tho' it be  
ever so bogus - and a mortal dread of the  
Federal displeasure. They are seeking if possible  
to save a corrupt administration from the  
just retribution for its sins.

You will easily understand from this  
brief expose how important are, extra,  
radical men, deem it to have true men  
to fill the offices. The people are right.  
but the leaders, or other would be, are wrong,  
but you know how much, tact, money,  
and win pulling can do, to overturn and  
affect the will of the people. -

The administration with Scurr as its agent

# Kansas Memory



KANSAS  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

E.B. Whitman to George L. Stearns

will spare no efforts to defeat this movement,  
and to clear the track of this people's measure  
as they did of the former one. - They have  
means at command and will lose no  
time in working their cause. Our people are  
generally poor, except in principle, and  
are ill prepared to go into the cause.  
If we had only the money which I solicited  
at Worcester for a purpose for which it never  
was used, to add now in this election it  
might change the result entirely. If any  
thing can be done for us in that way, no  
time will be lost. The State Convention meets  
on the 28<sup>th</sup> to nominate State Officers and  
on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of May they are to be voted  
for. If wrong men should secure the  
nomination, the field should be contested  
at the polls by volunteer Candidates, and  
they would need money - As the tragedy  
draws to a close we all find our feelings  
more deeply enlisted, we feel grateful for  
your sympathy; for farer we shall have  
no occasion I hope, and if so a small  
domestic one, will do the work effectively,  
But if you can furnish some funds it will

# Kansas Memory



KANSAS  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

E.B. Whitman to George L. Stearns

Atto 13. 1858

be a God send to us in the present crisis -  
Send me to them, but whom you know to be  
politically sound & of any thing & done,  
telegraph to Simmers & Leadbeater at S. C. Davis  
&c to draw upon Boston for it and forward  
by Express without delay -

If the people's Government is put in operation  
and the Federal power attempts to interfere -  
then will be a desperate struggle. We shall  
do our best to maintain our honor and the  
right - The Free States must call their  
legislatures at once together - remonstrate and  
with the General Government, raise ~~troops~~  
rain troops and by a loud demonstration  
cause the President to pause in his career.

But will they do that, I fear not. I  
do however believe that many a Spartan  
of the hundred can be found here to fill  
the place and who would infinitely prefer  
to fall with arms in hand to to a shameful  
and ignominious existence after having betrayed  
the interests of humanity so basly here in  
Kansas - Pardon the haste and imperfection  
of this. You can doubtless decipher it - The  
midnight hour must be the excuse

Very truly you find E. B. Whitman